Morale, Welfare and Recreation

Enhancing Retention

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Abstract

The multitude of missions that the United States Army faces in today's world of civil strife, starving nations, and national budgetary constraints have caused the Army leadership to make some tough decisions to maintain support of the national military strategy and the national security strategy. Downsizing has severely impacted the size of the Army, now less than 500,000 soldiers, yet its mission continues to expand all over the world (LTG Shinseki, 1996). It is an Army that must be capable of fighting, sustaining and winning in at least two simultaneous conflicts. To support the National Military Strategy (NMS), a smaller army must be equipped with the best and the most lethal supplies and equipment available (Gen Reimer, 1996). A platoon of today's Army must fight like a battalion from World War II. But Congress, in the midst of balancing the nation's budget, reduced the Defense budget to move toward that goal, and further reductions seem to be on the horizon.

The challenge that faced the Army leadership was simple. To fight with a smaller force and win, weapons and equipment modernization must be the highest priority within the Army's budget. Other programs have to "bite the bullet" and bear the burden.

Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) is a target that could easily be hit. Hawaii's program, with funding cuts, in the next two years, that amount to 20% of their APF budget (1997 BMG), must undergo a radical change to absorb these cuts. This paper will lay out the priorities that the soldiers and their families in Hawaii have put on the MWR programs and how it affects their decision to stay in the Army.

Introduction

Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs can trace its roots back to World War II with the USO touring shows that provided entertainment, the makeshift military Clubs that provided alcoholic beverages and food, and the unit lounges that afforded quiet time and leisure activities to soldiers during non duty hours.. Each activity's evolution continued through the Korean War and the Vietnam Conflict. Other programs were added along the way. Special Services, Recreation Services, Officers and NCO Clubs, Dad's Club, Wives Club Child Care Centers, Army Community Service and private associations in golf and Rod and Gun were organizations that emerged during this period. As separate activities, each had its own way of funding their programs; some were paid by Congress while others were self sustaining by generating income from sales or services. Money derived from Congress were labeled as Appropriated Funds (APF) while self generated money was called Non-appropriated Funds (NAF). These two types of funding make the Morale, Welfare and Recreation program unique from other Defense agencies which are funded only by Appropriated Funds.

In 1986, a decision by the Chief of Staff of the Army was made to consolidate management of these programs under one umbrella. At each Army Installation, a One Fund Manager position was established and all the separate NAF programs were consolidated into the Installation Morale, Welfare and Recreation Fund (IMWRF). At the Department of Army level the Community and Family Support Center was established under the Deputy

Chief of Staff for Personnel (DCSPER) to provide oversight on all of these programs.

The Army Community and Family Program Review Committee (CFRC) was also established as the decision making body on MWR policy and financial direction. The CFRC was made up of the Chiefs of Staff of all Army Major Commands and chaired by the DCSPER of the Army.

In 1989, the CFRC approved the establishment of three categories of Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs (AR-215-1). These categories helped to delineate the type of funding that would be used to run the various activities. Category A activities were labeled as "Mission Essential" and included Sports and Fitness, Recreation Centers, and Libraries. Appropriated Funds were the primary source of operating money with NAF used only when APF was not available. A recommended split of 85% APF and 15% NAF funding were the guidelines sent to local Commanders. Category B was labeled as "Mission Sustaining" and included Child Development, Youth Services, Arts and Crafts, Music and Theatre, Outdoor Recreation, Swimming Pools, and Information, Tours and Travel. Recommended funding levels were 50% APF and 50% NAF. Category C activities were labeled as "Mission Enhancing" and included the Officers Clubs, NCO Clubs, Enlisted Clubs, bowling, recreation lodging and golf. These activities were the business activities and were expected to generate profits for the IMWRF. They received very little APF support and in most cases were totally sustained by NAF. The mission of the IMWRF was to provide leisure quality of life programs to the community while generating a small profit for recapitalization. Category A programs were not required to generate a profit. Category B programs were required to break even and category C activities were supposed to generate NAF profits for the IMWRF. This business approach to managing the MWR program was a difficult learning process for

Commanders, many of whom did not understand the relationship between APF and NAF funding resources and the requirement to generate profits to maintain solvency of the IMWRF. Installation and Garrison Commanders are now being educated on the intricacies of the MWR program at their installations with the addition of the Installation Commander's Course and the Garrison Commander's Course taught at the Army Management Staff College.

The Problem

In Hawaii the Morale, Welfare and Recreation program has grown to an unrealistic proportion. In 1990, Hawaii's MWR program consisted of 55 facilities with over 1,100 employees. Included in those facilities were 6 fitness centers, 5 swimming pools, 5 libraries, 10 Clubs, 3 youth centers, 3 child development centers, 3 arts and crafts centers, 2 autocraft centers, 3 bowling centers, 3 Army Community Service centers, 2 outdoor recreation checkout centers, 2 Information, Tour and Travel offices and 2 Music and Theatre centers. These facilities supported an active duty population of approximately 18,000 soldiers. In 1995, the 1st Brigade of the 25th Infantry Division (Light) was reassigned to Ft Lewis, Washington, dropping the active duty population in Hawaii down to 15,457.

Even with this drop in population, more quality of life facilities were being built in Hawaii. Four child development centers, a fitness center, swimming pool, youth center, two golf clubhouses, and a library were built between 1991 and 1997. During this same period, 1991-1997, closures of facilities that were a financial drain to the Fund were

approved by the Commanding General. They included five Clubs, a swimming pool, fitness center, outdoor recreation check-out center, arts and crafts center, music center, and an Army Community Service Center. The benefit to the Appropriated Fund budget with these closures were offset by the additional new facilities that were built, primarily child development centers. Additional appropriated funds were added to the budget to cover these new areas (figure 1). However, in FY98 deeper cuts into MWR's appropriated fund budget now threaten basic quality of life services available to soldiers and their families stationed in Hawaii (FY98 Funding Allowance Document).

Morale, Welfare and Recreation APF Annual Funding Levels (\$000) FY94-FY98

Description	FY94	FY95	FY96	FY97	FY98
.S	6,642	7,375	7,275	7,524	6,459
CDS	2,416	2,906	3,360	4,118	3,321
ACS	<u>1,093</u>	<u>1,115</u>	<u>1,176</u>	<u>1,128</u>	<u>830</u>
Total	10,151	11,396	11,811	12,770	10,600

Figure 1

Given the current and programmed future levels of appropriated funding, tough decisions must be made on whether some programs are continued or discontinued. The management process for these decisions is slow since every form of feedback we can get is requested and evaluated before a final recommendation is presented to the

Commander. Customer feedback is by far the most important resource we need to have to make sound recommendations, especially on a facility closure or program elimination. Community and Family Support Center (CFSC) contracts a triennial leisure needs survey for the entire Army. The latest completed survey was conducted in 1995 (1995 Leisure Needs Survey) and a new survey instrument is currently being prepared for 1998.

Pertinent information from the 1995 survey was used along with a local survey conducted on December 6, 10, and 13, 1997 at the Schofield Barracks Post Exchange, Schofield Barracks Commissary, the Ft Shafter Shoppette, and our Sports Dome Club.

The Survey

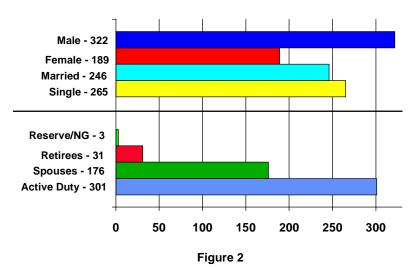
I prepared a simple survey which was given to passing customers at the various locations. I also used two volunteers to help me administer the survey to gain as much one-on-one feedback as I could. The survey was designed to be quick and to the point taking less than two minutes to complete. The customers responded to the simple questions and we recorded their answers. A copy of the survey is enclosed. We surveyed customers in two shifts at the commissary, post exchange and the shoppette, from 1000-1300 hours and from 1600-1900 hours. At the Sports Dome, we surveyed customers from 2200-0100 hours. We felt that this would give us a good mixture of active duty personnel, spouses, and retirees. We wore Santa Claus hats with red T-shirts to help keep the mood positive and we also passed out pieces of candy to each person who took the time to answer the survey questions. This marketing technique provided good results for our survey as many people came up to us to find out what we were doing. We surveyed 511 customers in those three days. My expectations for the surveys were that they would

have a close correlation to the 1995 Leisure Needs Survey conducted Army wide by CFSC. The raw data we collected was then loaded into a "Works" software program for analysis.

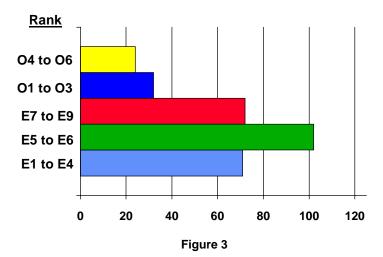
Survey Analysis

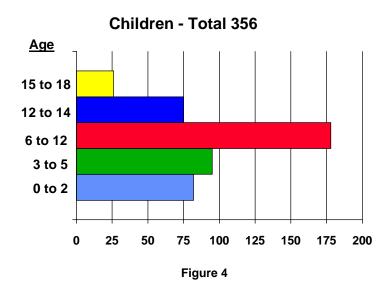
The first section of our survey was on demographics (figures 2, 3, & 4). When we started the survey I told my volunteers to try and get as many active duty soldiers to participate. This proved to be more difficult then anticipated because most of the people were not in uniform on the two Saturdays that we conducted the survey. But the results were weighted towards the active duty soldier. My reason for focusing on the active duty responses was simple; our funding is tied to active duty strength. If we had to close or severely cut any MWR programs, our active duty population's top priorities had to be protected.

Survey Demographics - Total 511

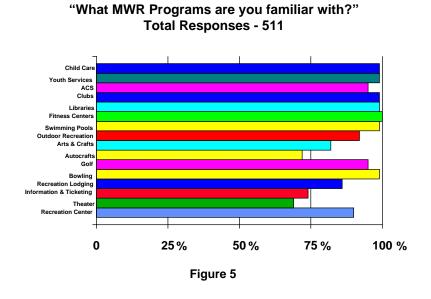


Demographics Rank - Total 301





Our first question asked, "What MWR programs are you familiar with?", provided us with good feedback for our marketing section (figure 5).



While most of the community is familiar with the basic MWR programs like fitness

centers, child care centers, and libraries, some of our customers didn't realize that we had so many other different activities. It varied with their patron category. For example, only 56% of the spouses knew that we have an Auto Craft Shop, yet 100% of them knew about our Child Development Services and Youth Services. Conversely, while 99% of all the soldiers surveyed knew we had fitness centers, less than 75% knew we had a Theatre program.

Our next question on the survey, "What MWR programs do you now use?" brought a variety of responses based on their category (figure 6).

"What MWR Programs do you now use?"

	Married	Single	Active Duty	Spouses	Retirees	Reserve/NG
Child Care	32%	8%	14%	34%	0%	0%
Youth Services	22%	6%	8%	27%	0%	0%
ACS	8%	11%	9%	4%	4%	0%
Clubs	22%	56%	42%	26%	28%	33%
Libraries	62%	39%	50%	48%	65%	100%
Fitness Centers	46%	73%	85%	15%	40%	100%
Swimming Pools	13%	6%	9%	14%	5%	0%
Outdoor Recreation	12%	11%	12%	11%	13%	0%
Arts & Crafts	3%	4%	4%	27%	42%	0%
Autocrafts	12%	16%	15%	2%	71%	100%
Golf	14%	9%	12%	3%	48%	66%
Bowling	16%	21%	19%	15%	16%	66%
Recreation Lodging	18%	13%	16%	12%	22%	66%
Information & Tcktng	32%	26%	30%	29%	12%	100%
Theater	7%	4%	5%	6%	11%	0%
Recreation Center	3%	9%	8%	4%	0%	0%

Figure 6

Young single soldiers used fitness centers, libraries, clubs, Information and Ticketing, bowling, and autocrafts to a large extent. This differed somewhat from the 1995 Leisure

Needs Survey (LNS) that was conducted Army wide. Clubs and bowling were not as high on the LNS as they were with our local survey. For the single soldier, the Sports Dome and the Bowling Centers here in Hawaii are state of the art facilities which offer entertainment and activities not available on the economy. Those two programs also serve alcohol to its adult patrons. While the Army has pushed the deglamorization of alcohol, our focus for our soldiers and their families is to keep them entertained on post. We are never going to stop those who want to drink from drinking. However, if they are going to drink we need to keep them on post rather than drinking and driving on the economy. To keep these soldiers on post, we must provide the type of services that they also find "outside the gate." The Sports Dome is a little over a year old. We surveyed our soldiers in 1994 on what they might like to see in the way of club entertainment. The Sports Dome concept was an overwhelming choice and is now a popular hangout for our young soldiers. In 1997, we featured the first bowling centers in the Army and the state of Hawaii which offerd Cosmic Bowling; a glow in the dark, disco and high energy bowling program that revolutionized bowling in our community. Our soldiers and their families love it. Other Army installations will soon follow our lead.

In the married soldier and spouse categories, other programs besides the ones mentioned above are frequently used. Not surprisingly, child development and youth services were highly utilized. In the Department of Defense: Our Children, America's Future report (1997), 41% of all children of military parents were 5 years old or younger. Our local survey showed that 48% of the children of Army parents were 5 years old or younger (figure 4). That correlated with the high response rate of our survey. The 1989 Military Child Care Act laid the foundation for the comprehensive programs which we

have today. President Clinton considers the military child development program as the best in the nation and has tasked the military services child care professionals to assist local governments and communities in improving the quality of child care throughout the nation (DOD Memo, 1997).

The retirees seemed to use the most programs of all that we offer. Of the 31 that we surveyed, heavy uses in clubs, fitness centers, libraries, arts & crafts, auto crafts, golf, bowling and recreation lodging showed up in their answers. Obviously, they have more time to utilize these programs than the active duty soldier and their families.

Our third question, "Please rank the top five that you feel are most important to you?", turned up some surprises as compared to the 1995 LNS (figure 7).

Top Five Priority Programs

Married Single Active Duty Fitness Centers Fitness Centers **Fitness Centers** Libraries Libraries Libraries **Child Care** Clubs **Youth Services Youth Services** ACS **Child Care** ACS Information & Ticketing **ACS**

Retirees Reserve/National Guard **Spouses Child Care** Libraries Libraries **Youth Services Recreation Lodging Fitness Centers** Libraries Clubs **Autocrafts** Information & Ticketing Information & Ticketing **Recreation Lodging** ACS **Autocrafts** Clubs

Figure 7

Army Community Service (ACS) was not heavily used by soldiers and their families (figure 6), however the program received top five votes in 4 out of 6 categories. The Army community recognizes the value of service that ACS provides; financial

counseling, family member employment services, relocation assistance, family advocacy, crisis hotline and army emergency relief. While ACS is not heavily utilized in Hawaii, soldiers know where help is immediately available if ever the need arises.

In the 1995 LNS, clubs were rated in the bottom five of MWR programs yet in our Single Soldier, Retiree and Reserve/NG categories the clubs in Hawaii were voted in the top five MWR programs. I think the difference is due to two factors; 1) the state of the art clubs we have that make them attractive to our soldiers here in Hawaii and 2) the high cost of entertainment in Honolulu.

Child Care was easily voted our number one priority closely followed by Youth Services in our Spouses category and also rated high in the Married Soldier and Active Duty categories. They were not on the top five list in the 1995 LNS. The high cost of living in Hawaii make it almost imperative that spouses work, especially those of lower ranked soldiers. When they work, someone has to watch their children. Costs for child care on the economy also run about 30-40% higher than our programs.

Fitness Centers and Libraries were high in the Married Soldier, Single, and Active Duty categories. This followed the 1995 LNS which also rated them in the top five. Fitness is tied to readiness and the libraries are tied to the Army Continuing Education Services program (ACES). An ACES Education Center cannot be accredited without a library in the same installation (AR 621-5).

The bottom five priority programs in Hawaii did not provide any surprises (figure 8). They did differ with the 1995 LNS which listed the bottom five programs as 1) Travel agency services 2) Club dining services 3) Sports above intramural level 4) Marina services and 5) Catering/banquet services.

Bottom Five Programs

Married
Theater
Arts & Crafts
Recreation Center
Outdoor Recreation
Clubs

Single
Theater
Arts & Crafts
Youth Services
Swimming Pools
Recreation Lodging

Active Duty
Theater
Arts & Crafts
Clubs
Recreation Centers
Outdoor Recreation

Spouses
Autocrafts
Theater
Outdoor Recreation
Recreation Centers
Arts & Crafts

Retirees
Child Care
Youth Services
Outdoor Recreation
Recreation Center
Swimming Pools

Reserve/National Guard
Arts & Crafts
Outdoor Recreation
Recreation Center
Theater
Bowling

Figure 8

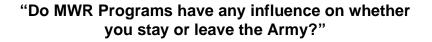
Our Theatre program, while one of the most successful in the Army today, is not a program that the soldier uses nor supports. The program sustains itself with heavy attendance by the civilian community. The Arts and Crafts program was in the bottom five for 5 out of 6 categories. While our patrons are loyal, they are few in numbers. We can no longer afford to underwrite this program with appropriated funds. The Autocraft program was in the Spouse's bottom five list however, for the active duty soldier, the Autocraft program is similar to the ACS program. While not heavily utilized as compared to fitness centers and libraries, the program still provides a needed service to the soldier when their cars break down or require maintenance. Cost of auto repairs on the economy is very high.

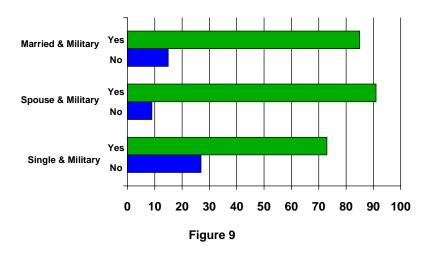
The Recreation Center program was also part of the bottom five priority for 5 out of 6 categories, however, they were not listed in the single soldier category. The Recreation Center program focuses primarily on the single soldier. The Better Opportunities for

Single Soldier (BOSS) is the primary program run by the Recreation Center staff. Hawaii's BOSS program was voted best in the Army 3 out of the last 4 years at the annual BOSS conference.

The other programs listed in the bottom five for each category are programs that are self sustaining NAF activities. They are run as businesses and we monitor their financial profitability every month. Programs that do not meet financial goals are continually evaluated for possible closure.

Our final question on our survey was, "Do MWR programs have any influence on whether you stay or leave the Army?" (figure 9).





Seventy-nine percent of all those surveyed by us said that MWR programs do have an impact on whether they stay or leave the Army. In the Married Military and Spouse categories, we recorded the highest positive response rates. With 59% of the Army being married, this was not a surprise. The single soldier response, while less than the Married

Military and Spouse response rate, was still significant.

A married soldier's comments summarized the many responses.

"Our quality of life has improved a lot since we came into the Army. I would hate to see any of our benefits get cut. We are asked to lay our life on the line when the situation calls for it. I would do that for my country and family. But when we are back at home, it's nice to have these things to go to."

Conclusion

Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs can no longer be everything to everyone. Congressional scrutiny of MWR programs have resulted in tighter controls and APF budget cuts in recent years. Our appropriated fund budget has been cut by \$2.2 million dollars in FY98 and another \$.5 million dollar cut is scheduled in FY99 (1997 BMG). The reliance on nonappropriated funds to make up the APF shortfall is a reality that will get worse in the future. Under current conditions we cannot continue to operate our MWR programs as they have been. Given our appropriated fund budget for FY98 and FY99, program closures, reductions, or modifications must be made. Recommended actions to the Commander, 25th ID(L) & USARHAW will include feedback obtained from the 1995 LNS and the local MWR survey conducted in December 1997. We must maintain our fitness centers, libraries, child development services, youth services and ACS. Those are core programs that we must protect and fund with our remaining APF

dollars.

The Theatre and Arts and Crafts programs should be turned into NAF activities. The appropriated funds will be withdrawn and the employees given the opportunity to convert to NAF or placed in a reduction-in-force status. Fees and charges will be increased to make up the shortfall. Marginal activities will be evaluated and either cut or modified. Facility hours of operation will be reduced. An evaluation period of approximately six months will be conducted to determine whether the program should close or continue to operate.

Autocrafts and Recreation Center recommendations would include partial reductions in appropriated funds. Fees and charges would increase while hours of operation would decrease. Again, an evaluation period would determine if further action is required.

The Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs in Hawaii and across the Army are undergoing major changes. An all NAF workforce is on the horizon. Restructuring of ACS and family programs is also being talked about at the Department of Army level. Consolidation with the Army, Air Force Exchange System (AAFES) or consolidation of all military services MWR programs are current proposals being considered.

As we purue our course of action, we must not forget that these programs do make a difference to our soldiers and their families. Our soldiers have made it very clear to us that they consider MWR programs very important to their lives. Our leadership's challenge is to maintain these customer service programs with a reduced budget or suffer the consequences with an Army which will not be able to retain its soldiers.

Morale, Welfare and Recreation Questionnaire

Active Retired Self Spouse Female Rank		Other	
Marital Status			
Children Ages	3,,		
1) What MWR programs 2) What programs do you	now use? Che	ck all that app	•
3) Please rank the top five Please rank the bottom	•	-	•
	Know	Use	Rank
Child Care			
Youth Services			
ACS		<u> </u>	
ACS Clubs Libraries			<u> </u>
ACS Clubs			

Outdoor Rec.			
Arts & Crafts			
Auto Crafts			
Golf			
Bowling			
Recreation Lodging			
Info & Ticketing			
Theatre			
Recreation Center			

2) Do MWR programs have any influence on whether you stay or leave the Army? y/n

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